

**The History**  
*of our*  
**Missionary Societies**



*by*  
*Sister Hillegonda v. d. Smissen*



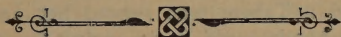
# THE HISTORY

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## *Missionary Societies*

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SISTER HILLEGONDA v. d. SMISSEN



Translated by Mrs. J. Quiring

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# THE HISTORY OF OUR MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

## FOREWORD

All who have experienced the joy of salvation through Christ Jesus must confess: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." Besides being grateful for this great gift above everything else, we women owe our elevated social position to Christ. Though the position of woman in Israel was on a higher plane than that of her sisters among the surrounding heathen nations, where she was held little above the beast, yet through the coming of Christianity she for the first time was given a place alongside of man as joint-heir to the promises of God in Christ.

How much consideration did Jesus accord woman while here on earth! This she recognized and many a one became his follower, serving Him out of a grateful heart for all the benefits she had received. She followed Him to the cross and was permitted to be the first witness of His resurrection at the sepulcher. In the early apostolic church we find a Tabaea, who served her Lord with the work that her hands could do in caring for the poor; we also find a Lydia, who with others opened up her home in true hospitality for the messengers of the Christ. The apostle Paul mentions the names of many women, who were his co-workers. The deaconesses, with Phoebe foremost among them, were a great help and blessing in the early Christian church. During the later persecutions many a woman became a martyr for her faith and even throughout the dark centuries of the Middle Ages there were always such of our sex who were true servants of Christ's in their own environment. After the reformation everyone was so busy with himself at home that hardly a thought was given to the benighted people of heathen lands, who knew nothing of Christ; they were witnesses, nevertheless, for Him through their lives and their deeds. Among our forefathers, the Anabaptists, women as well

as maidens were willing to undergo suffering, to sacrifice their material possessions, even their loved ones—yea, to die the death of a martyr, rather than deny their faith. Others were driven from place to place, suffering persecution and privation, dishonor and shame for Him in whom they had believed.

We, on the contrary, are permitted to live our faith unmolested and undisturbed, and to enjoy many blessings, both material and spiritual. What do we do to manifest this Christian faith? We have to be thankful for the fact, that Christian womanhood, after having taken a retiring position for centuries, finally is permitted to step out into her real field of missionary activity. The cause of missions has finally shown her her rightful place in the church and in the world and has demonstrated the fact, that woman's relationship to her Savior is closely tied up with the social and family-life, for only in the measure as she lives a sanctified life, will home and society improve. The realization of her deep debt of gratitude—not only for the salvation of her soul but also for her deliverance from domestic and social thralldom—fit her preeminently to help her lost sisters among the benighted peoples. We cannot and should not all go out to them in person, but those who have gone need our prayers and support. The Lord rewards our faithfulness in the doing of little things, therefore let us cheerfully do what we can, be it ever so humble a deed. Our daily contacts outside of the home, our faithfulness in the carrying out of assigned duties first of all, bear witness to the fact that we are followers of His; if, however, our heart is full of love to the Savior, we will endeavor to help wherever we can in order to spread the good news of His kingdom and to save other souls for whom Jesus also died.

In order to encourage others to work toward this end, the following lines have been written.

THE AUTHOR

## I. THE BEGINNING OF EVANGELICAL MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

Before women's missionary societies could function, it is self-evident that missions must have existed. Hence, in an introductory way, it seems in place to say just a word with regard to the origin and growth of this more recent line of work. Unfortunately, we have little information about the part women played in the early missionary period, but what we do know goes to show that she fully cooperated with man and suffered heroically for her convictions.

John Eliot came to America, as a young man and took charge of a pastorate at Roxbury. This position he held for a period of 60 years. Soon after beginning his work at this place, his passion for winning souls urged him to bring the glad tidings to the Indians living in the immediate neighborhood. He learned their difficult language and in 1646 he held his first Indian sermon in the wigwam of the Waban, their chief. During his lifetime he gathered and settled 3600 converted Indians in 24 different villages and at the time of his death in 1690, he left them 24 native preachers to shepherd them.

In 1760, the king of Denmark sent devout German missionaries from Halle to his heathen subjects in India. After a sea-voyage of 8 months, they landed at Trankebar. They faced an exceedingly difficult situation at first, so much so, that the companion of Ziegenbalg felt forced to return. The latter, however, during his 12 years of labor there, was permitted to accomplish missionary tasks as few have been able to do. In 1719 he was stricken with the cholera and at the age of 36 was called to his reward, leaving a young widow—his wife of only a few years—alone in a strange land. During this comparatively short time he had learned to speak the Tamil language as his native tongue; he had also written a grammar and compiled a dictionary besides having translated the New Testa-



ment and parts of the Old into this difficult language. This translation was later completed by Missionary Schultze, who, after 20 years of work in India, returned with the same to Halle in Germany, where he had it printed.

Hans Egede, a pious Danish village pastor sailed for Greenland in 1721. Because of her little son, Paul, this decision cost his wife a long and bitter struggle and she spent half of one night upon her knees. She finally asked her small child whether he thought they ought to go to the heathen. "Yes", he answered, "let us go; I want to tell them about Jesus and teach them the Lord's Prayer." When they were ready to depart she was braver than her husband. The labors of these two is a record of untold hardship on the one hand, but of miraculous intervention and divine help on the other. Later the Moravian Brethren continued this work.

Driven from the bigoted country of Moravia because of persecution, Protestant fugitives were invited by Count Zinsendorf to come and settle on his estate in Silesia. Here they founded the village of Herrnhut and in 1732, when this congregation was 10 years old and consisted of 600 members, it sent out its first missionary, Dober by name, who went to the West Indies. Soon others from the same group were sent to Greenland, to America and to Africa. These Moravians, a relatively small group of believers, scattered over various parts of Germany, England and the U. S., have done far more per capita for missions than any other existing church group and God has blessed them at home and abroad, but especially on their mission fields.

Christian F. Schwartz, a pupil of August Hermann Francke in his orphanage at Halle, went to Trankebar in 1750. He was an energetic, talented and fearless young man, full of self-denial, unsparingly sacrificing himself for the winning of souls to Christ. He labored in this field for half a century, his work being remarkably blessed, and

when he died, his name had gained such renown, that he was mourned by the entire nation from the lowest to the highest. It will certainly be of interest to know that this richly blessed missionary had a praying mother, who died, however, when he was but a child. She placed him in the care of her pastor and her weeping husband with these words: "I prayed for the gift of this child and the Lord heard my prayer. For this reason I have dedicated him to the Lord. As long as he lives he shall be the Lord's. Take him and develop in him every inclination he shows toward serving Christ. This is my last will."

When the 18th century drew to a close, England also began sending missionaries into various heathen countries. Neither space nor the purpose of this history, permit one to mention many, but the name of William Carey dare not be omitted. He went to India in 1793 and when he died at the ripe age of 73, he had been a leading spirit in the missionary world for over 50 years. When this cobbler first expressed his desire to go to the heathen in order to convert them, many thought he was a fool. But in God's hand he was the chosen vessel to do remarkable deeds for Him. To this end his outstanding linguistic talent aided him. Through his efforts the first impulse was probably given toward the formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in England.

Adoniram Judson, the apostle of Burma, who went out from America as one among the first five missionaries sent from this country, must also be mentioned. These five men as volunteers for the foreign field, brought about the organization of the first American mission board called "The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions." Later the Baptist Missionary Union was organized. We have various interesting biographies describing the work of Judson and his three wives. It is a story of unselfish heroism. They worked much, suffered much and accomplished great things for Christ. Before this time no woman had ventured forth from America to



do mission work. To India or China it meant a long, long journey without conveniences, going way around the Cape of Good Hope in a sailing vessel. For this reason many thought Ann Hasteltine most eccentric, when she resolved to become Judson's wife and go with him to India.

Until 1799 only few missionaries had gone forth. With the beginning of the new century, however, one missionary society after another sprang up in the various countries, so that in 100 years over 170 of them were functioning. Interest in missions steadily increased and the Lord opened one door after another among the various tribes and peoples for the labor of his servants. At present there are also 110 women's missionary boards actively engaged in missionary work, and women's and girls' societies are to be found everywhere. The invention of the steam-engine and the steamboat and their use for transportation has greatly simplified travel. Now thousands of missionaries of both sexes are laboring in all parts of the world.

## II. MISSIONARY ACTIVITY AMONG THE MENNONITES OF EUROPE

In 1848 the "Taufgesinnten" or Mennonites in Holland, who did so much for their brethren in Switzerland and Germany during the period of persecution, organized a missionary society, the first group among the Mennonites to do so. Their motive was to help meet the spiritual needs of the natives in the Dutch possessions overseas. Rev. P. Jantz, their first missionary, was sent to Java in 1851. Rev. Schurmans was his assistant until 1878, when he was compelled to return home because of illness. By this time Rev. Jantz's son, Rev. P. A. Jantz, was ready to take his place at the side of his father and for 50 years he has been actively engaged in a remarkably prosperous work on this field as for over 40 years also has been Rev. John Fast, the son-in-law of Father Jantz. Later Rev. Huebert also entered this field. Before the beginning of Mennonite missions, the brethren in Germany and

Russia had shown great missionary interest and had supported the work of the various German societies then existing. When our denomination organized its own mission work they loyally turned all their energies toward the support of this cause. This support was not only financial in character, but later on practically all of the missionaries sent out by the Dutch Mennonite Board were furnished by their brethren in Germany and Russia. In its 79th annual report, the Dutch society states that they now have over 4000 Javanese Christians on their field. These are settled in colonies and they have their own schools, as well as hospitals, a leper asylum and a missionary training school.

In 1870 the Dutch society also opened up a field on the island of Sumatra and sent out Rev. Henry Dirks, a Mennonite from South Russia. Unfortunately the extended work carried on here, is at present without a leader. Rev. P. Nachtigal, who labored there all alone with great success, recently passed to his reward.

Simultaneously with the founding of our own specific missionary work, the women's organizations among the Mennonites in Germany and Russia felt the need of assisting their missionaries on the foreign field.

In 1899, upon inquiry I received a very interesting report from Holland, with regard to the work the women were doing there. (Unfortunately a recent letter asking for further information was returned to me undelivered.)

Their first society was organized in the large congregation of Amsterdam in 1853 by its pastor, Rev. van der Good. Its members furnished the outgoing missionaries and their wives with all the necessary equipment and kept in touch with them on the field. They met once a month, and at these meetings the reports from the missionaries were read and discussed and various business with regard to their needs attended to. At the close of each meeting one of their pastors led in a short period of devotion. In order to keep the interest in their mission

work alive and active, an envelope containing missionary literature was passed among the members each week. Before Christmas the society sent boxes filled with gifts to each of their mission-fields on Sumatra and Java. All cash gifts were forwarded thru their general treasury.

Since this society was very large and its membership chiefly recruited from the wealthiest families of Amsterdam, the women in the congregation belonging to the middle class, did not care to join this organization. They were, however, interested in missions and wanted to contribute their share; in order to meet this need, Pastor van der Good organized a second society in 1870 which had from 70-80 members. This society met every fortnight on Monday's from 7-9 P. M. One member read aloud while the rest sewed. A Bible passage as well as other devotional literature was read and discussed. Each member was assessed from 1-10 Gulden, as she was able, some members giving their contribution in things that they made. They helped fill the Christmas boxes sent out by the congregation, besides making clothes which were distributed among the poor of the congregation at Christmas time. In this connection house visits were made, tracts were distributed and personal work was done. A third society, which was organized in 1888 helped them in this work. This society was composed of working girls and called itself "Das kleine Kraenzchen" (the little circle). There were only twelve members when it was organized but it grew rapidly. They also met one evening every fortnight with a program similar to that of the second society. This circle did much to further the Christian life and awaken missionary interest among this class of girls in the congregation.

The above report and the letter which accompanied it breathe one and the same spirit. One instinctively feels that altho separated by language and customs we are one in spirit and Christian love.

This report awakened in me the desire to come



into personal touch with these societies and my wish was later materialized. Those were blessed days in Amsterdam! Mrs. von Lennep, the president of the above-mentioned first society—a lovely, refined woman—expressed her regrets for not having been informed of my visit earlier. She then would have postponed the meeting of the society, which had just met before my arrival. She was at that time very much interested in our work among the Indians, about which she had been informed. The Amsterdam society also had a children's missionary society called "Der kleine Mitarbeiter" (the little helper), which had also met the day previous to my arrival. In this group the children were told stories from missionary life and taught to give for missions. I was very happy though to be able to attend a meeting of the second women's missionary society on the Monday evening of my stay in Amsterdam. I received a welcome greeting from a goodly number of women and if we spoke slowly and distinctly we could understand each other. We sang together each in her mother tongue: "Die wir uns allhier beisammen finden". Their dear president, Sister Veenstra, an experienced Christian woman, had charge of the devotional period. After a letter from their foreign field had been read, they wished to hear about our work among the American Indians. In her annual report Sister Veenstra later writes: "It is indescribably lovely when God's children come together, for they soon feel that a bond of fellowship unites them. How wonderful it is that we can pray, 'Our Father, who art in heaven'. We then instinctively feel ourselves one with all of God's children and can pray together with them, 'Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.' Thereby, dear sisters, we are praying that the heathen and the Mohammedan sisters may become our sisters in Christ. To this end our women's missionary societies should contribute their share and we are grateful for the privilege to cooperate in this work."

I know that in various other parts of Holland Mennonite women's societies were formed; of these, however, I have not been able to get a report.

In the city of Danzig, Rev. Mannhardt and Mrs. Conwantz organized a W. M. S. in 1848, which met every fortnight on Wednesday evenings to do missionary work. In later years part of their finished work was sent to Sumatra. Unfortunately I have no recent report. In and around Marienburg, West Prussia there are various Mennonite women's societies. In Heilbronn, South Germany, the Mennonite women work together with their Moravian sisters. In Durlach, near Karlsruhe, also S. Germany, a society exists. In Wuerzburg one was functioning before the war. Unhappily it has not been reorganized since. As a whole, this type of work among Mennonite women in Germany is extremely difficult because of the fact that the Mennonite groups are so scattered and the individual families live so far apart.

## THE AWAKENING OF MISSIONARY INTEREST AMONG THE MENNONITES OF NORTH AMERICA

As a contribution to this theme Rev. S. M. Grubb sent Mrs. S. S. Haury, who had first been asked to compile this history, various reports as well as clippings from old Mennonite papers. According to these, the Mennonites in Waterloo, Canada, organized a missionary society in 1856. Thereupon the Pennsylvania conference organized one in 1866. In the same year the so-called Evangelical Mennonites united for the purpose of doing missionary work. To this day their interest has not cooled and they are still active in the Lord's work. The above-named organizations, however, were composed of both men and women, hence they were not missionary societies in the sense that we have them today.

The society of the Pennsylvania conference wrote to Europe asking for information concerning the missionary enterprise of the Mennonites there and as to how they

might best cooperate in supporting their cause. They received cordial replies from Rev. Mannhardt, Danzig and from Rev. B. Roasen in Hamburg. The annual reports of the Dutch Missionary society were also sent them. In his letter from here, Rev. Oberholtzer stressed the fact that the Mennonites in America had long enough remained idle in the great cause of missions so definitely instituted by the Master; now, however, since their interest had been aroused and they had been informed how they might be of assistance to the European brethren in their work, they wished to do all they could, until the Mennonites in the states should have begun their own missionary work.

Slowly the obstacles were removed and the way opened for this work. Various scattered groups of Mennonites came into contact with one another and in the beginning of the 60's they united and organized the General Conference. The first move toward this union was made by South German Mennonites, who had settled in Iowa and Illinois and who sought union with the Pennsylvania groups. Gradually their number grew and other groups joined them, among these also the Swiss congregations. From its beginning the purpose of this union was to further the work of God's Kingdom. In the early 70's the conference appointed a Board for Foreign Missions. In 1880 Mr. and Mrs. S. S. Haury were sent to the Indian Territory. The work was begun at Fort Darlington among the Arapahoes and in 1883 a second station was opened at Cantonment by them. Rev. and Mrs. H. R. Voth then supervised the work at Darlington. Later other missionaries were sent to the field and more stations opened. Among the former Rev. and Mrs. R. Petter, who had come from Switzerland, were a great asset. In his many years of service Mr. Petter has mastered the Cheyenne language and has and is still doing valuable translation work. Because the American Indians have suffered many ills at the hands of the white man and have acquired his vices, mis-



sionary work among them is very difficult but not without visible results.

We also have a number of stations among the Hopi Indians in Arizona. Rev. H. R. Voth was our pioneer missionary on this field, others have followed. Here as in Oklahoma, graves mark the resting places of some of our workers.

At the beginning of the 20th century, we sent our first missionaries overseas. The brethren P. A. Penner and J. F. Kroeker together with their wives were sent to India. Of these, brother P. A. Penner still is in the work and with the aid of quite a coterie of helpers, it has grown and been visibly blessed.

In China a field was taken over. There, too, under the Heavenly Father's visible guidance, the efforts have been blessed, but the Chinese revolution has retarded the work during the past few years. Many of the missionaries were in the homeland on an enforced furlough or else in Chinese coast-cities. The most of them have, however, returned to the field. We have lists of all our missionaries in our year-books and specific days of prayer designated for them in the Missionary Prayer Cycle. Let us all intercede for them and for the native workers, as well as for our mission-board. The Prayer Cycle can aid us greatly in praying systematically.

Since our work has grown with such leaps and bounds and we have such a goodly number of missionaries on the various fields, many opportunities, yea needs, have presented themselves to the sisters in the homeland to cooperate in these efforts. It is now my purpose to report of the development of the work of the women in our conference. Much of this will be a repetition of Mrs. R. A. Goerz's report, which was published in our church papers several years ago.

#### IV. THE MISSIONARY SOCIETIES OF OUR CONFERENCE

(On this subject Mrs. R. A. Goerz gave a most interesting report in January, 1927, during the week of Bible Lectures at Bethel College. With Mrs. Goerz's permission we are including some of the material she had gathered in this history.)

The first missionary society of our conference was organized about the middle of the 19th century. Mary Risser, a devout young Mennonite woman in the Salem church in Ashland Co., Ohio, was filled with the desire to use her needle as once did Tabea of old in fashioning gifts of love in the service of her Master. She gathered other similarly-minded women about her and together they agreed to come together one entire day during each month for this purpose. They sewed for the poor and for other charitable purposes. Later, when the Mennonite seminary at Wadsworth opened its doors, they did what they could for this institution. Finally, when the first mission station was founded among the American Indians, the Ashland society joyfully contributed its share for this missionary cause. The founder of this society soon passed to her reward, but the society continued the work she had begun under the Lord's visible benediction for a period of about 50 years, or until after the old members having either died or moved elsewhere, the congregation was forced to liquidate. These women usually gathered on the first Thursday of each month as early in the morning as possible in the home of one of the members; at that time they lived quite scattered, some of them driving from four to six miles with horse and buggy. If the roads were impassable, they either went a-foot or on horseback across the fields. Usually all members were present, sometimes with their husbands, whom they also put to work at such tasks as for instance the unskeining of yarn, for a good deal of knitting was done. In the forenoon some of the members were occupied with the cutting and getting ready of material to be

sewed in the afternoon, while others sewed on the machine. In the afternoon, all busied themselves with needle-work or with knitting, while their pastor read to them and closed the day with a short period of devotion. At noon and, during the long summer days, also in the evening, a simple meal was served. For every unnecessary dish a fine of 25c was paid into the treasury. No one missed these meetings save from necessity and everybody present worked diligently. Through this spirit of cooperative work the love to one another and to the mission cause was furthered.

In recalling the activities of this society, one stands in thought at the grave of many a one of its faithful members recalling the words, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." May the Lord give us grace to work faithfully and to pray and give as long as we are able. It is our privilege to be permitted to help and blessed are we if on that day it will be said of us, "She hath done what she could."

## V. OTHER MISSIONARY SOCIETIES OF THE PAST CENTURY

Next to the missionary society in Ashland Co., Ohio, the one organized in the Zion church at Donnelson, Iowa, is the oldest society in our conference. In 1867 the women of this congregation met for this purpose in the home of their pastor, Rev. Showalter for the first time. Their original purpose was to make bedding and bed-linen for the Wadsworth Seminary, which was opened the following year. All sister members of the congregation were considered members of the society and they met biennially. The society as such, was not organized until 1880, when officers were elected for the first time. After that quarterly meetings were held, later on one every other month and after 1912 they met every month. At first the various homes were the meeting places, now the meetings are held in the



church basement. At present each meeting is opened with devotionals and the reading of correspondence from the various mission-fields, etc. The members usually sew and since cash is at present more often preferred to ready-made clothing, they do quilting for other people and raise their missionary contributions in this manner. Occasionally they take charge of the Sunday evening service and furnish a missionary program.

When our first mission station was opened in Darlington, the society was especially interested in sewing for this field, later on the Arizona field was also supported in this manner, then Montana and now they sew for India as well. Since 1926 a Bible woman in China is supported.

Besides this society, the church also has a Girls Society, "The Busy Bees", which also sews.

I cannot close this report without in an especial manner remembering the faithful mothers and grandmothers who were its first members. Among these grandmother Hirschler, nee Haury, was the last to pass away. She died in 1925. From a financial standpoint the members of this society were not as able to help along with the work as was the Ashland society; nevertheless they served their Master, as faithfully as they could.

In the congregation at Summerfield, Ills., the society was organized in 1876. The women assembled regularly in the home of their pastor, Rev. Jacob Krehbiel. Mrs. Krehbiel was elected its first president, the wife of Rev. Dan Hirschler became treasurer, and Mrs. Christ Baer its secretary. The latter was the mother of our well-known Rev. J. B. Baer.

Only two of the charter members of this society still live. The original time of meeting as today was the first Thursday of the month; then in the homes of the various members, now in one of the S. S. rooms of the church. The opening exercises consist of a hymn, the reading of a scripture passage and prayer, then, while the rest sew, one member reads a missionary tract or some biography.

The material needed for sewing is bought with the money obtained through monthly assessments and birthday offerings. The society supports a Bible-woman in China, besides giving toward other missionary causes and aiding the needy immigrant brethren in Canada.

The Summerfield society supported Wadsworth Seminary very liberally in its day. At that time this undertaking was practically the only effort of our conference needing support. Our first missionaries Dr. and Mrs. Haury, also came from this congregation.

During the period of Mennonite immigration from Russia and Prussia, when Kansas was opened up for settlement, most of the young people from the Summerfield congregation went West, settling around Moundridge and Halstead. There they organized the two congregations active in these respective places today. In Halstead a missionary society was organized in 1882. Now the congregation has 3 societies. Since 1906 they are supporting Agarmatti, who taught one year in the Janjgir school. They also fill the sewing list for one of our mission stations. Each member buys the material needed for her allotment and makes the garments at home. They have also been supporting the girls home at Winnipeg. They meet on the first Wednesday of each month with one of their members or in the missionary room in the basement of the church. This was furnished from a cash gift by Anna Showalter, one of its deceased members. At their meetings they usually carry out some prepared program.

The Russian colonists, who came to Kansas in the 70's of the last century, had already been doing missionary work in Russia, and so it was not long before they were actively interested in the missionary endeavor of our conference. In 1891 the **North Alexanderwohl Missionary Society** was organized, with the motive to further missionary interest especially in our own field in Oklahoma and to support the same through the sewing of needed garments and bedding as well as by material gifts. The

society met every month, opening its meetings with the usual devotional period and roll call was responded to with a Bible verse. At its second meeting a resolution was passed that a missionary sister, who should devote her entire time to the Indian women in the camps, be supported from a tenth of the cash gifts received. Later the society also undertook the support of a Bible woman in India and now it also pays the expenses of the woman overseeing the Girl's Boarding in Champa. From its beginning the members endeavored to serve the needs of both Home and Foreign Missions. Hence, they have assisted needy Mennonite brethren at various places—first in this country, and later during the famine in Russia, in that country and in the past years the immigrant brethren in Canada. The Bethesda Hospital in their midst has always enjoyed their loyal support.

The Bethesda Aid Society was organized 36 years ago; it now bears the name, The Goessel Aid Society. Three of its charter members are still taking active part in its activities, four have passed away. Members of the various churches in the Alexanderwohl district, who live close together, cooperate in its support. Its beginnings were small, as for example, during that early period, when everyone was struggling for his own existence, a monthly assessment of 5c per member was made. But even under such conditions each member was happy and thankful to be able to take part in such a labor of love. The undertaking has grown as the plant of a mustard seed proportionate to the increase in material prosperity of the community. The society has developed in a normal way and God's blessing has visibly been resting upon it.

In 1892 upon the occasion of the Middle District Conference in Pulaski, Iowa, the missionary societies held a joint meeting. This so influenced the women of that congregation, that after some correspondence, a missionary society was organized not only at that place but also in the Noble congregation. At present there are two

women's societies in the Pulaski church, one in town and one in the country. Here, too, the usual devotional period opens each meeting and missionary news is read while the members sew for the needs of our stations. Some of the members, who are not physically able to attend the meetings, assist in a material way.

In the Noble congregation the missionary society gives a monthly missionary program before the Sunday evening service. A number of the sisters sew for our stations in their homes. In the Wayland congregation a Dorcas Society is active.

During the last 20 years of the past century the number of societies organized in the various churches grew steadily, but we have no reports from these. A statistical report appearing in the **Bundesbote** in 1889, mentions 7 societies then existing, a second appearing in 1891, gives the names of 14 societies which had sent in reports but there were some which had failed to do this. In the **Mennonite Year Book** for 1898, 35 societies are named and in 1899, a member of the Foreign Board, who sent out the lists, was in correspondence with four others. Most of these held monthly meetings; some sewed a part of the time, using the remainder for exercises of a devotional and missionary nature. Other organizations, however, carried out a regular missionary program and the members sewed the allotted material at home. The methods used in conducting the various organizations were often quite different, depending upon the customs and conditions prevalent in the various communities, but the same purpose motivated them all. "We want to serve the Lord and in our small way be his handmaidens in order that our congregations may also be agents in the furthering of His kingdom. May he continue to steadily arouse in us love and interest for service in His kingdom, may He also help us to prove ourselves His humble servants not only in the missionary cause but especially in the round of daily duties in our homes." (From a report in the



Bundesbote, 1899.)

## VI. CLIPPINGS FROM MRS. GOERZ'S REPORT

One of the first fruits of this union, (viz., the organization of the General Conference), was the building of an educational institution in which to educate men and later also women. Here ministers of the Gospel and missionaries were trained. In this connection we find the first records of women uniting to help the work of the Church. In an article written by Mrs. S. S. Haury for the Sewing Society program of the Pacific District Conference in 1924, we read: "I recall, when I was but a slip of a girl, that my mother and sisters made comforts and quilts to be used in the Wadsworth Seminary as soon as its doors should be opened to students. That was in 1867. No doubt, the same thing was being done in other homes in the congregation at Summerfield, Ill., as well as in other congregations that took active interest in the erection of the first school of higher education among the Mennonites of the General Conference.

The beginning of the mission work in Indian Territory in 1880 and especially the beginning of the Mission School at Darlington in 1881, gave the impetus for the organization of mission societies in a number of congregations. The women united and supplied the bedding and linen that was needed for the school. They also made some garments for the children in the Mission School.

About six months after the opening of the mission station, the new building was destroyed by fire, which also took the lives of four children, one the child of the first missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. S. S. Haury. This calamity aroused the women to action and clothing and bedding were immediately sent to the workers, who had lost all earthly possessions. The Halstead, Kansas, society, being the nearest and having the chance to send a shipment with its pastor, Rev. Chr. Krehbiel, President of the Foreign Board, who hurried to the scene, was the first to ship a large box. Soon, other shipments began to arrive.

While the school was being rebuilt, the workers at home were busy, and when the building was finished, they again supplied it with bedding, etc.

As the work grew and expanded, the women became more active in sending things. Not only dry goods were sent, for I can remember how, when I was just a little girl, the women of the Halstead church met with my mother at our house and prepared and canned peaches .....

Dried fruit, dried corn, noodles and other things to eat were also sent by the willing workers at home.

For years then, there were more or less organized groups of women working on things they thought might be used, or that had been suggested to them by the missionaries. The latter method, however, required much writing and took much time for our already hard-working people in the field.

As the mission work expanded and stations were started by Rev. H. R. Voth in Arizona, and Rev. Rudolph Petter in Montana, the Mission Board appointed one of its members to try to divide the work of the women in such a way that all stations should get a proper share of the clothing. For years, Rev. van der Smissen did this work. He tried to help the societies to find missionary literature for their programs when they needed it. He also sent out yearly questionnaires to the societies and these, when answered, gave the Board some kind of an idea of what was being done.

Later, when fields had been opened in India and China, and our missionaries began to come home on furlough and visited the churches, telling them of their work, new interest was aroused.

This was also the case shortly before the General Conference at Reedley, Calif., in 1917, when Rev. and Mrs. P. W. Penner visited the churches to tell them of their work. As Mrs. Penner would talk to the women, herself being so filled with the spirit and needs of the people in India, she somehow brought it about that wherever she

went, the women who heard her also got some of this zeal and spirit. In consequence, mission societies sprang up in churches where there had never been any, and in others where the interest had lagged, new life came into the society and the work was taken up with new courage.

It seems that sometime before the Conference, perhaps while visiting the churches or even while still in India, the idea had occurred to the missionaries that it would be a good plan to have a woman on the Mission Board, who should have charge of the work with the women's societies and who should be the medium between missionaries and societies.

The Mission Board was asked and gave its consent to this plan, for where is the man who wants to put in his time telling women to make eight sheets, three quilts, five pairs of socks, eight head shawls, six pairs of wristlets, six leper jackets, etc., etc., and then later he must write one society that the neck bands on their shirts were too tight and another that the leper jackets must not have tight bands on the sleeves on account of the condition of the hands of the lepers, etc. Such details do not seem to belong to men .....

When the women met during the Conference at Reedley, Cal., in 1917 and had disposed of their usual business, Mrs. P. W. Penner talked at length to them and pleaded with them to work with more earnestness and enthusiasm. Then the idea of having one of their number take up the work between missionaries and societies was explained. The result was that instead of one person three were elected, namely, Mrs. S. S. Haury, an ex-missionary, Mrs. F. J. Isaac, a missionary candidate, and the writer.

Not having had any experience, this committee began its work very haltingly and cautiously. Its first meeting was held in an auto near the church at Reedley. There they organized, discussed plans of procedure, divided the field into three districts and decided that each member

should do the corresponding with the societies in one district. The Pacific, Northern and Canadian Conferences formed one district, the Western Conference another, and the Eastern and Middle Conferences, the third.

Rev. Musselman, the member of the board, who then was the medium between the missionaries and societies gladly turned over, to the executive committee, the information he had and thus they began.

This new committee felt that the first thing to be done must be to let the existing societies know of this change and of the existence of the committee as well as of its duties. Knowing also that new methods are not always looked upon with favor, this was not an easy matter.

As there was no complete list of existing societies, the directory of pastors was resorted to and the pastors received letters with a sort of questionnaire, which when returned gave the committee the standing of the women's work in each church and in most cases the names of one or two women with whom future correspondence might be done.

It was an encouraging surprise that a few of the first letters received by the committee from women who represented societies not only expressed their approval of the plan of working through this committee but also their joy for now they felt that they would know where to write for information about the work they might be doing.

Next all the missionaries in the home and foreign fields were written to, asking them to inform the committee of the needs of their station.

When the replies came from the missionaries, the committee also had reason to feel encouraged for they too were glad for the new arrangement.

As has been stated, clothing had been sent to our mission stations in America for years, but the foreign fields had never received any. The missionaries in China did not care for clothing as cloth there is cheaper and the



Chinese do beautiful weaving and sewing. They, therefore, preferred money to buy materials. But they did mention dried fruit as something they could use.

The workers in India, however, felt that it would be a great help to them to get clothing from our women at home. And as some of our missionaries among the American Indians decided it would be best, in order not to make paupers of their people, to discontinue giving them clothing and bedding, the doors in India were thrown open.

It seems as if this was a very good thing for our Mission societies, for when people had something specific to do and especially when the need had been pictured to them so vividly by our workers from the field there was a great revival among the workers at home and soon many were sewing for India.

Now the missionaries are writing from India that they are attempting to reduce their want lists. So the time may soon be at hand when there will no longer be much to sew, but on that account our interest ought not to lag. In time there will be more and more societies who will meet for the purpose of mission study and prayer .....

In June 1926, 128 questionnaires were sent out of which 96 were returned. (This shows that we still have some societies that do not co-operate.) Of these, 13 societies reported that they do no sewing directly for mission stations but collect money to send instead. Seven societies failed to report their membership, and the other 89 have a total membership of 3,033. The largest society has 487 and the smallest 9 members .....

At the last meeting of the Women's societies in connection with the Eastern District Conference, (1928) the report from their executive committee showed splendid organizations in the various congregations. It is encouraging to note how rapidly the work has grown. At that date there were 427 members. Thus in East and West, in North and South, this work is developing and growing .....

There are also a number of Sunday School classes and

Girl's missionary societies that have been doing sewing and sending gifts to missionaries ..... Our city mission also received some clothing, etc., and many boxes and bales of clothing were sent to the immigrants in Canada and Mexico and some to Germany ..... We must acknowledge that God has blessed the efforts of the women abundantly and that the work has grown beyond the expectation of the most hopeful. May He unite us all closer in prayer and service and keep us humble and willing to sacrifice so that we may be found worthy to carry on the charge He has committed to us.

Mrs. R. A. Goerz.

## VII MISSIONARY LITERATURE

It is of vital importance that the friends of missions and the various missionary organizations keep themselves posted on the progress of missions in order to keep their interest in missions alive and active. With this end in view a little paper "Nachrichten aus der Heimat", was published by the General Conference after our own mission had been opened in the Indian Territory. My own father, who was then secretary of the Foreign Board edited the department for the older people while Rev. C. Showalter edited the children's page. Probably because of financial difficulties, this paper was later discontinued and in its place the editors devoted a page in the Bundesbote entirely to missions. There was of course not much to report from our own mission-work, its beginnings being very small, but missionary interest in one's own field can be furthered by reporting the activities from other fields as well.

At the beginning of this century little pamphlets were published successively in the German language by the Mennonite Book concern under the general theme "Bilder aus unserer Mission". The first of these, entitled "A Cheyenne Congregation" was written by Rev. R. Petter; the second, "Woman's Work in our Mission" by Miss Bertha Kinsinger; No. 3, "Our Arapahoes" by Missionary

J. A. Funk; No. 4, "Discouagements" by Missionary H. J. Kliewer; No. 5, "Heathendom among the Hopis" by Rev. J. B. Epp; No. 6, "The Study of the Language", by Rev. G. A. Linscheid; No. 7, "The Work Among the Lepers" by Rev. P. A. Penner; No. 8, "The Work among Orphans," by Rev. J. F. Kroeker. These pamphlets furnished information on the various phases of our work in the different fields.

In 1915 the Foreign Board through the instrumentality of its treasurer, Rev. G. A. Harder, published a more complete history of our missionary activities, also in German. This was entitled: "An History of the Missionary Work of the General Conference Mennonites of North America."

During the session of the General Conference in Pennsylvania in 1920, the desire was expressed by various members of our women's societies to have space given them once a month in our church papers for reports on the various phases of their work. Mrs Goerz writes upon this matter as follows: "Soon an agreement with the editors of the *Bundesbote* and the *Mennonite* was made and monthly reports were published in both papers under the headings "**Frauenecke**" and "**Womans Work**" respectively. Sister Hillegonda v. d. Smissen was appointed editor of the German column and Miss Anna Stauffer for the *Mennonite*. At present Miss F. Luella Krehbiel, Clarence Center, N. Y. is editor of *Woman's Work*, while Sister Hillegonda still edits *Die Frauenecke*, but upon her request Mrs. P. E. Frantz, Buhler, Kans., has been appointed as her assistant.

In 1925 the W. M. S. of the First Mennonite church of Bluffton, Ohio published two pamphlets under the supervision of its literature committee. The one was entitled "The Conversion of Garib" and written by Miss Martha Burkhalter of India, the other "What Hath God Wrought" by Missionaries Rev. and Mrs. E. B. Steiner, also of India. The latter has since been translated and published in Ger-

man. In 1926 a third pamphlet entitled "The Present Situation in China", by Rev. Ed. G. Kaufmann, was also published.

At the business meeting of the W. M. S. of our General Conference in Berne in 1926, a resolution was passed to take over this literary work as a permanent phase of its activities. Mrs. Musselman of Bluffton, Ohio was appointed literature secretary by the Executive Committee, her office at the same time making her a member of the committee. Mrs. J. S. Schultz and Mrs. J. Quiring, also of Bluffton, were appointed the two other members on this committee.

Since then this committee has published two further pamphlets: "It Happened So" (in German and English) by Rev. and Mrs. G. A. Linscheid and "A Fragment of Missionary Life" by Miss Martha Burkhalter. It has also gotten out a leaflet of 12 suggestive missionary programs, as well as published the **Prayer Cycle**, which was prepared by Miss F. Luella Krehbiel. At this same business meeting in Berne it was further resolved to authorize the executive committee to publish a monthly letter, which was to circulate among the societies and be read at their monthly meetings. This letter, entitled **Missionary News and Notes** and printed both in English and German, brings news from the various fields and announcements of the committee. It brings calls for prayer for especial purposes as well as for special lines of giving. It thereby helps to further the cause of missions and to unite the women still more in this one great cause. It is expected that every society send in 10c per capita annually in order to defray the running expenses of the Executive committee. It is our wish and prayer that these various general efforts may fulfill their purpose and be a blessing to every member.



## VIII. THE GENERAL MISSIONARY PROGRAMS OF THE W. M. S.

The sisters of the Swiss churches around Bluffton had the custom of preparing a monthly program for their monthly missionary meetings; the articles to be sewed which an appointed committee had cut out were taken home and completed there. In 1889 upon the occasion of the dedication of the St. John's church near Pandora, Ohio the Middle District Conference also convened at the same place. The sisters of the congregation conceived the idea of inviting the sister members of the other societies in the conference to join them in a missionary festival at this time. An afternoon for this purpose was turned over to them by the conference officers and a prepared program carried out. Now at that time you must know it was an almost unheard of thing for a woman to speak in public before a mixed audience. Therefore, when at the appointed time the church was packed to the doors, and the chair-woman had announced a hymn and read a scripture passage, her courage failed her and she tremblingly approached one of the sisters sitting near by with: "You must pray, I cannot." "Ask one of the brethren", was the answer. "They will reply that it is our meeting and we must carry out the program". Again the reply: "I am not prepared to do so." "I will announce another hymn and then call on you." I relate this incident in order to show our younger sisters how hard it was for a woman 40 years ago to do such a thing even for the cause of missions. Mrs. Anna Ledig, who had been actively engaged in mission work in the Indian Territory, was present at this first general meeting and took part in the program.

After this meeting I had the privilege to remain in the Middle District about 20 years longer, and each year a similar meeting was held in conjunction with the district conference sessions. Before each meeting the women held a short business session, which was opened

by a devotional period and roll call of the congregation by the secretary. Those present responded to the call of their respective congregations with a passage of scripture or a verse of song. This was a good method of introducing strangers, of forming contacts and of gaining further information with regard to the methods used in the societies. Necessary business was then discussed, the use of the offering decided upon and a program committee elected for the next year. Since the congregations were widely scattered, this joint missionary meeting fostered the spirit of unity and cooperation in a common cause. We who met there represented various German-speaking groups—Pennsylvania-Germans, South-Germans, Hessians, Swiss—but we were all Mennonites united for one aim and purpose—to serve the Lord together in the field of missions.

In connection with the General Conference, our first joint meeting was held in 1893 also in the St. John's church near Pandora. In the Middle West our first Mission festival was held three years later (1896), when the General Conference met in the Alexanderwohl church, north of Newton, Kans. This procedure was something entirely new for the Western churches and it probably was looked upon with mixed feelings. Although there were no autos at that time, the people came together in throngs, some bringing their entire family along for that day; some who could spare only one day, chose this day especially to attend the conference. The good Alexanderwohl folk were heavily taxed in entertaining us all. Wagon loads of bread were brought out from Newton, and it was reported that the conference guests had consumed an entire beef, besides countless chickens and many other things. For this evening every seat was occupied long before the time set for the opening of the service, standing room was at a premium, and people who could not gain entrance, drove their carriages under the open windows. It was needless to worry whether a women's missionary program might find

objectors here, on the contrary it was most favorably received. The subjects discussed at that meeting were as follows:

1. Woman's place in the O. T.
2. Woman's place in the early Christian church.
3. Women and girls of our denomination.
4. Woman's work for the Kingdom in our day.
5. Various methods of conducting successful Missionary meetings.

Songs and missionary declamations interspered the reading of these topics and short remarks by several of the brethren closed the meeting.

Since that time the women have had charge of a missionary program at every General Conference session. The District Conferences, too, usually devote an evening to this work. Various members of the Foreign Board, missionaries, student volunteers, Indian Christians, deaconesses, various members of the W. M. S. and even children have taken part in these programs in discussing the various phases of the mission cause.

In looking over the program of this early period, one finds the names of workers, who have long since passed to their eternal reward. In the past 30 years many changes have taken place, but our God still lives and the work which he has assigned us remains to be done. May He find many willing workers, who will serve Him in loving devotion, whether it be in the home church, as deaconesses, or in the various fields of home and foreign missions. "Let us work.....while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work," and blessed is he who has served his Lord faithfully for he shall receive his reward.

## IX. CHILDREN'S SOCIETIES

Since the writer has at various times been questioned with regard to the work of the children's societies, she is adding a few words on this subject in conclusion. If one has been an active member of such a society from early childhood, it is not difficult to write of one's own experiences; the readers, must, however, pardon a possibly too personal note, which is unavoidable.

When my older sisters were partly grown, they, together with some of their girl friends, asked mother to help them do something for missions. She was only too glad to accede to their request and once every week they met with her and sewed the things she had cut out for them, while she read missionary stories to them and they sang and prayed together.

This little gathering increased in numbers, and even after the older members were grown, younger willing hands took up the work. Later, one of my sisters helped mother in the supervision of the work and during the summer vacation occasionally met with us for a whole day to dress dolls, make balls, etc., for the Christmas box to West Africa, where the dresses were sent that we had made during the year. (A Mennonite mission did not exist at that time.) In the month of September the Christmas box was packed and sent off; the remainder of the year we sewed for some phase of the Home Mission field, sometimes for a Jewish Mission.

It was a sad farewell we took from this society when we left Schleswig-Holstein and came to this country. Later in Summerfield, Ill., opportunity again offered itself to organize such a society. One afternoon each month was spent together in sewing, while some member read or told missionary stories. It is a splendid thing to train children to sew in this way, and even if the stitches occasionally become large and crooked and the work later must be done over, the little ones must never be discouraged. It



was a great help to find the girls willing even after they had grown older, to remain with the society and help the younger ones. In this society, also, we occasionally met for a whole day during the summer to make quilts of the patches which had been pieced during the year.

In Moundridge, Halstead, Garden Township, Berne, Hillsboro and possibly elsewhere, there were or still are similar children's societies. One ought to make an especial effort to train the little folk as a supply for such societies, otherwise when the charter members are grown such an organization may die.

The societies described above were only for girls, but in one Ohio congregation years ago, a society existed in which boys also took part. A prepared program of song and prayer and declamations was rendered. Each child was given some part on the program, if it was only to learn and speak a Bible verse. At the close of each meeting the assignments were made for the next meeting.

In this same congregation there was also a society for grown girls. The things these young women made were annually sold at a bazaar. At each meeting a most instructive program was carried out. Each month one certain mission-field was discussed—the country itself, and its people, the missionaries stationed there and their work with its joys and sorrows. Thus a rich store-house of knowledge was gathered throughout the years and in this way an interest in the mission cause developed, which later generally expressed itself in active missionary interest, in liberal giving and real devotion to the work.

May this review of our share in the development of missions in our church, further in us the desire to help in the building of God's Kingdom. If we are no longer able to help with the work of our hands, perhaps we can give more liberally of our material means. At all events we can pray—and real intercessory prayer is a great power. Therefore let us be faithful in prayer, and do all we can in the Lord's work.





